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THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

ISSUED BY DIRECTION AND UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AMERICA.

For free distribution to Members. The T.S. in America is not responsible for any statements herein. Published by the Theosophical Society in America, at 144 Madison Avenue, New York City.

WILLIAM Q. JUDGE, President.

Each member is invited to send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and notes upon Theosophical subjects. When necessary, the various communications will be condensed by the editor. Members should be careful to write distinctly and on one side of the paper only.

In sending questions, or answers to questions, whenever an assertion is made that such and such is a doctrine, or that "it is said in Theosophical literature," and the like, the name of author, article, volume, and page referred to must be given.

All communications should be addressed to **The Editor, Theosophical Forum, 144 Madison Avenue, New York City.**

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

QUESTION 55.

How far should branches go in permitting the discussions at their meetings to be led into questions concerning topics not directly bearing on the theosophical philosophy or in permitting members or outsiders to detail their views on socialism, spiritualism, single tax, or the like, unless they have a direct bearing on Universal Brotherhood?

William Q. Judge.—While branches have the right to have any sort of discussion they please, it has been found that those which import into the meetings subjects not such as we call theosophical, have a quarrelsome or precarious existence. Special topics, such as Socialism or Single Tax, always lead to friction and away from Theosophy, because they create partisan strife. And again, members should not attempt to make special applications of Theosophy to such topics unless they know both so well as to be able to instruct their hearers. And do members in general know Theosophy, even, so well as to be qualified to apply it to anything but daily life and conduct? I do not think so. If a Socialist or Single Taxer, or rabid Spiritualist is asked to speak

on any one of those subjects, he will be found to be a partizan or extremist, and most likely, if well up in his particular topic, he will not be versed in Theosophy.

Theosophy is so new, and its adherents so few, and all reformatory questions (as specialties) are so changeable and evanescent, it is far wiser for a branch to go on studying Theosophy and propagating it together with the idea of Universal Brotherhood than to offer particular explanations on empirical topics. Were Theosophy understood and practised everything needing reform would be at once reformed.

I think the time to settle this question is later, because as yet the mass of members in general are not versed in Theosophy. They are unwilling to go to school though they need schooling in Theosophy. When they can thoroughly and at the word explain the doctrines we promulgate they will then be competent to touch other matters.

Dr. J. D. Buck.—"How far should they go"? Not a step! All discussions should be held *strictly* to the topic in hand and on T.S. lines. The T.S. is a society with a special object, on definite lines well defined. It is *not* a debating club, or socialistic or literary organization and should hold to Theosophy and *nothing* else. The ignorant may call this dogmatism; it is simply good common-sense. Many want to tell what they "*think*" of Theosophy before they have thought anything about it at all, or to air their peculiar views on socialism, etc. Well, let them; but *not in T.S. meetings.* It would be as appropriate for a class in mathematics to discuss *Etidorhpa* as for a T.S. meeting to discuss socialism as such or anything else outside of Theosophy.

E. T. Hargrove.—This is a question for each branch to decide for itself. If the majority of the members do not wish to discuss socialism and the like, they are at perfect liberty to pass a resolution instructing their chairman to rule all such discussions out of order. I know one case where this was done with good results. Two or three spiritualists had for many months persisted in turning every meeting into a suppressed riot, as no matter what might be the subject in hand they would inevitably drag in some unimportant phenomenon connected with "spookology." This at last became unbearable, and the above method was adopted to put a stop to it. The minority resigned, but the branch at once gained in strength and activity.

The cry of bigotry would always be raised were such proceed-

ings taken, but it should be remembered that there is a wide distinction between the Theosophical Society and one of its branches. Members of a branch have a perfect right to select their own subjects for discussion, and if a minority wish to discuss Euclid, even "from the standpoint of universal Brotherhood," they would do well to form another branch with that specific purpose in view, instead of inflicting their idiosyncrasy on an unwilling majority. Exactly the same thing would apply if those who wished to study the theosophical philosophy were in a minority. It would be foolish to try and force such study on the majority. A friendly withdrawal would accomplish the desired end with less friction.

Jas. M. Pryse.—No subject that comes within the scope of the declared objects of the T.S. can very well be excluded from discussion in its branches. The topics discussed should be left to the judgment of the branch officers, or those who arrange the syllabus; for it is purely a matter of judgment, and not of arbitrary definitions of Theosophy or Universal Brotherhood. Nor should the range of subjects be restricted to too narrow limits. The cause of Universal Brotherhood would not be furthered by Theosophists shrivelling the Society into a sect and losing sympathy with the better tendencies, opinions and projects of the people generally. Often a subject slightly out of the usual line of branch studies is valuable as a relaxation: too great mental or emotional strain in any one direction is liable to result in bigotry and fanaticism; and bigoted and fanatical Theosophists would be a menace to the movement.

But at any particular branch meeting the discussion should be confined strictly to the subject under consideration; and the chairman should courteously but firmly call to order any person who seeks to inflict his opinions or hobbies upon an audience not desirous of considering them.

Claude Falls Wright.—The answer to this is in my opinion summed up in a correct and efficient recognition of the real purpose and intent of the Theosophical movement, just as the question itself must have arisen out of a lack of full comprehension of these things. The Theosophical Society, as everybody knows, does not teach any philosophy and knows no dogma, and its fundamental object is Brotherhood. For this reason and with such a program before the world any branch might readily become the *rendezvous* of all kinds of socialistic hobbyriders, who

would declare individually that they alone could point out the road to brotherhood and the amelioration of mankind, and that as the Society declared itself to be without doctrine they had a right to do this; further that it was *untheosophical* and dogmatic not to allow them the platform as often and for as long as they desired to hold it. The same condition might also maintain in cases of certain classes of Spiritualists, Christian Scientists, and the founders of new sects generally; the studies of the branch of matters connected with the occult and spiritual side of nature and man—the Society's third object—affording them their particular loophole. While one may perhaps recognize in some of these persons a worthy and laudable desire to save and enlighten the members of the branch, that assuredly should not stand in the way of a summary dealing with them and a correct explanation of the position of the Society. It should be pointed out, for instance, that the branch, not being sectarian, itself objected to sectarian views; that the members of the Theosophical Society, as its name would indicate, were students of the Wisdom Religion, in all its phases, and therefore could not accept as conclusive any one view of life: that (in the case of spiritualists) the relating of personal experiences without point was wasting the society's time, and that so far as their philosophy was concerned the experience of ages in theosophical study had indicated its errors; and that (in the case of socialists and communists) the Wisdom Religion took a larger view of Brotherhood than the mere comforts of the physical man or the mathematical distribution of selfishness and possessions.

The purpose of the theosophical movement is to awaken in man a knowledge of his inner nature and its lawful relation to the external world and the rest of mankind, and where a number of persons form a Branch it is for the object of that study. If at its meeting a disintegrating and egotistical outsider cannot be induced to take an interest in anything outside his own ideas, the Chairman can put to the vote a question as to what the Branch wishes to discuss on that evening and thus close the matter. Universal Brotherhood does not consist in giving a Branch up to disruption because of a foolish fear of hurting the feelings of some tactless crank; any more than does the "heart doctrine," as some seem to think, consists in agreeing with, or hugging, everyone who comes their way, or any other sentimentality.

QUESTION 56.

It has been said that all sounds are still in existence, and that if

we could rise high enough we would be able to hear every sound that has ever been produced. If this be true, would not the intermingling of so many sounds only produce a roar as of thunder?

Dr. J. D. Buck.—I think not: for the reason that the capacity to hear would be limited in each individual to certain vibrations, and some would hear some certain sounds and others would hear different ones. Furthermore, vibrations that produce sounds might also produce *forms*, as there must be points or foci in the ether where sound leaves off, and other effects begin. What we call "sound" is the *effect* of vibrations on the ear, and where there was no ear to hear silence would reign. "Sound" includes two concordant vibrations, one in the ether or Akâsha, and another in the ear.

William Q. Judge.—This is not a profitable query theosophical. The FORUM is not for scientific replies, but for theosophical discussion. This question relates solely to natural physical laws. Science deals with it and says the resultant sound would be a harmonious tone. Questioner should read books on vibrations of air; music; sound-waves; and consult practical scientific men on this question. Suppose the FORUM replied "No," or "Yes," to the question, what would be the effect on theosophical doctrines? Nothing at all, and no advance made either way.

QUESTION 57.

When great teachers like St. Paul, St. John, Socrates and others incarnate do they commence with the degree of development with which they closed the preceding incarnation? If so, why are there so few great souls in the world teaching and living the proper life?

William Q. Judge.—Let us take the last part of your question first, and ask you how do you know there are "so few great souls in the world"? It would not be right to judge all other men by yourself nor by a limited number of persons you may have known, hence it is likely you do not so judge, but have merely assumed that there are very few souls in the world like unto those you mention. Such an assumption does not seem to be a correct one. There very probably are among us now many great souls of the past. Nothing in philosophy or the doctrine of reïncarnation is against such a view. We being actors on the present stage are not able to judge whether some others of whom we know are great men or not, who may be regarded by posterity as great personages like to St. Paul and your other examples. It

is more than likely St. Paul was not highly regarded in his time; now, in the distance, he shines out. Certainly we know that Socrates had such poor regard from his contemporaries as to be poisoned because he was thought not to be a good man: now we, so far off, look at him differently. In the same way will it be respecting our own present times after the lapse of centuries.

As to where any Ego will begin in any life is determined by karma and the needs of development. The whole front, or mass, of our nature is so enormous that one life or one sort of development is only a small part of it: there is no possibility of at once exhibiting it all. So the former life of St. Paul may be now certainly hidden for future use while he is undergoing another necessary development which had formerly been neglected. If we look at his life we find he was a persecutor once. That was not at all atoned for by his subsequent conduct—unless of course you admit vicarious salvation—which I do not. He must atone for all that hurt done to others, and his reïncarnation in some obscure place and body for several lives would quite accord with the needs of the case. So you can reason out the whole matter, recollecting that karma goes by cause and effect, and that the whole vast nature of man must be considered, and that you and I do not know the whole nature of those people you refer to. Hence we must conclude that the present age and the karma of past sages do not coïncide in such a way as to produce many living before us. And if we ask what is the use, we must conclude that in such a selfish, superficial time as this they would be useless and out of place.

QUESTION 58.

Have all living animals, insects, etc., an Ego and will each of these Egos eventually incarnate in the body of an infant?

Joseph H. Fussell.—The answer to this question would depend upon the meaning given to the term "Ego." If by this term we mean the self-conscious "I" which depends upon the awakening of Manas, then I should say that the Ego does not exist save in man and those beings who have passed through the human stage of development. At the same time, however, I think we must grant that every living creature is, or has as its root of being, a unit of life or soul and that this unit of life progresses from stage to stage and through all the varying forms of the different kingdoms until it reaches the human stage of development and is then known as an Ego. I thing it would be wrong, however, to speak

of an insect or an animal, or even a man, meaning thereby his external nature simply, as a soul or an Ego. That which we know as an insect or an animal or external man is simply expression on this plane of the soul which is behind. From this point of view it would be wrong to say that a vegetable becomes an animal or that an animal becomes a man. But on the other hand we should speak of this progression simply with reference to the unit life or soul which is behind these phenomena known to us as vegetable, insect or animal.

We may go even further than this and say that the unit of life which at last functions in human form is even back of the mineral manifestation. In other words, that the soul has to pass through all the stages of evolution and all the forms which characterize these stages and to pass through every phase of experience. The Kabalistic aphorism that a stone becomes a plant, a plant an animal, an animal a man, a man a god, does not refer to the external stone, plant, animal or man, but to the interior essence which lies back of these. I think a complete answer to this question is contained in the third fundamental proposition of the *Secret Doctrine* (vol. i, page 17; new edition, page 45), and I would suggest that it be studied in connection with it.

Dr. J. D. Buck.—Every organism is a center of consciousness, and evolution eventually after millions of millenniums would bring each to the human plane—and beyond.

QUESTION 59.

It is said that at the time of death everyone reviews all the actions of his past life and even knows the object for which he took upon him the now fading personaliy. Is this knowledge or vision possible at any other time during life?

William Q. Judge.—It is said to be possible for one who knows all the secret laws of nature and of his own being. Certainly it would appear that no other sort of person could possibly do it. And such individuals must be almost as rare as the horns upon a hare.

QUESTION 60.

If the evil done in a past life has been done in spite of and in opposition to the efforts of the higher portion of the human soul, how can that soul or Ego be held responsible for such evil? Or is it the Ego that sins through the personality?

Dr. J. D. Buck.—The philosophy of the crucifixion and final redemption of man explains this. Evil and sin and suffering are but names for ignorance, and all these lead to greater good and complete compensation. Without sorrow there could be no joy, and few persons seem able to conceive a state of being in which both joy and sorrow would be alike impossible. God and Devil; heaven and hell; joy and sorrow, disappear together, and yet being and consciousness remain as the "*One*, without a second." This is Nirvana, after the "sin of separateness" has been atoned for. The Ego becomes a centre in which the divine functions and through which it acts without obstruction when the at-one-ment is complete. In philosophy the terms "evil," "sin" and the like must be used with care and very definite meanings, as must also all terms, if confusion is to be avoided. We are apt to forget that many of these terms are purely metaphysical, and not rocks or potatoes. In many cases it would be better to say egoity—a quality—rather than Ego—a "thing."

QUESTION 61.

What is the opinion of the leaders of the T. S. in regard to vegetarianism?

W. Q. Judge.—Physicians and those who have tried vegetarianism are those who should speak on this. The opinions of "leaders," as such, are of no consequence. I tried it for nine years, and found it injurious. This is because the western man has no heredity of vegetarianism behind him, and also because his dishes as a vegetarian are poor. They should be confined to rice, barley, wheat, oats, some nuts and a little fruit; but westerners don't like such a meager variety. The stomach does not digest vegetables, it is for meat; the teeth are for tearing and grinding meat. Most of those vegetarians I know eat a whole lot of things injurious to them and are not benefited. Had we an ancestry going back thousands of years, vegetarians always, the case might be different. I know that most of the experienced physicians we have in the Society—and I know a great many—agree with my view, and some of them insist that vegetarianism is wrong under any conditions. With the latter view I do not agree. There ought to come a time in our evolution when new methods of food production will be known, and when the necessity for killing any highly organized creature will have disappeared.

The other branch of the subject is that regarding spiritual development and vegetarianism. It has been so often dealt with

it is sufficient to say that such development has nothing to do with either meat-eating or the diet of vegetables. He who gives up meat-eating but does not alter his nature and thoughts, thinking to gain in spirituality, may flatter himself and perhaps make a fetish of his denial, but will certainly thereby make no spiritual progress.

QUESTION 62.

"Lower manas" and "kama manas" are terms in frequent use in Theosophical literature and conversation, and from the fashion in which they are used they seem to mean many things to many minds, while not infrequently they are used as though their meanings were synonymous. Will the FORUM *kindly give a clear-cut definition and so clear up this haze?*

Dr. J. D. Buck.—If confusion exists it is not in the terms but in certain minds. The term "lower manas" is used to distinguish from "higher manas," and these do not refer to any *definite* "thing," but to the *direction* in which the consciousness of the Ego functions. Again, "kama manas" is always "lower manas," or consciousness of Ego functioning through "desire," sense, appetite, etc. The words refer to the same thing under different relations, that is all. If we had "clear-cut definitions" on many of these things it would lead to dogmatism or materialism, or both. Think of the *conscious* Ego as the real thing; and all conditions, changes, and relations as shifting of planes or states of consciousness. There are no hard and fast lines, or, as H. P. B. said, "no air-tight compartments." Instead of using one term with many meanings, Sanskrit metaphysicians use different terms with five shades of different meaning. When this is once understood no confusion can result except from our own ignorance of terms and real meanings.

William Q. Judge.—It is not the FORUM'S place, nor is it possible, to give these definite replies and informations. Lower manas is English and Sanskrit, kama manas is all Sanskrit, and *lower* may mean *kama* to many. Each one is entitled to what he likes. Only after lapse of much time can the "haze" be cleared.

QUESTION 63.

Sometimes a hypnotist makes his subject blind to some of the objects before him while he is able to see others. How is this phenomenon explained?

William Q. Judge.—Doubts have been raised as to whether this was ever done. But taking it for granted, man is a *thinker* only and sees nothing but ideas. Hence if the idea of any object is inhibited, as in mesmerism, he will not see the idea of the subject and hence is said "not to see it." His bodily senses and himself being disjointed, the operator imposes his own mind and inhibits ideas.

Claude Falls Wright.—I can vouch for the statement that this has been done, as I once saw the experiment successfully made by a hypnotizer in London, in H. P. Blavatsky's rooms at 17 Lansdowne Road, and in the presence of H. P. B., H. S. Olcott and several others. A professional hypnotizer from a college desired to show some experiments to celebrated persons, and especially to H. P. Blavatsky, and was invited to do so. Amongst other performances he made his subject become blind, first to a card, then to a person present. This phenomenon occurred after the subject was apparently awake. He was first thrown into a trance, then made to promise in that state to become blind to the card and person, and then was demagnetized. On waking he could see everything in the room but these, being apparently wide awake otherwise. He seemed somewhat astonished when the person to whose presence he was blind pushed him, but had apparently no knowledge of the cause. Strange as it may seem the professional gentleman had no interest whatever in an explanation of this or any of the phenomena; but afterwards H. P. Blavatsky gave substantially the same explanation as that of Mr. Judge, printed above, adding also that in this particular case the subject was not really awake but only partially so.

SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION

FOR THE USE OF BRANCHES.

In articles and addresses never use Sanskrit or foreign terms without also giving the English meaning; use English terms preferably.

STUDY OF THE "SECRET DOCTRINE."

Contains general information directing thought of the world to spiritual nature, sufficient for centuries. Volumes should be first studied so as to discover general laws, and afterwards for details. Principal laws: all nature alive; evolution; no death in the universe; cycles; astral, psychic and spiritual spheres; progression of planets, continents, races and men. Each volume divided into three parts: *(a)* the philosophy, *(b)* proofs by religion, *(c)* proofs by science. In studying to grasp the teachings and science effort should be made to get at the spirit rather than to learn off the statements and Sanskrit names. *Secret Doctrine* not the last word. Statement of H.P.B. that she only started the thought of the world in this direction. The work intended to awaken the intuitions more than the analytical mind. Apparent contradictions in it stand out as such only to those who read with preconceived notions. Students should try to get to the centre or standpoint from which the work was written. *Secret Doctrine* can only be fully understood by those who can reach to the same development as the writer of it. Effort to be made to reach to that plane.

MEMORY.

Phase of the mind important to understand as an aspect of the imagination. Its relation to psychism. A cause of rebirth. Fatal to concentration or living in the present. Difference however between observing the past and living in the past. Its relation to future selfish hopes. The cause of desires. Teaching of all sages summed up in "look not behind or thou art lost." Distinction between reminiscence, recollection and memory. Why do most people not remember past lives? Memory of events to be distinguished from memory of experience. Memory one great cause of the sorrows of the world. Uselessness of remorse. Students should practise to prevent the mind turning over and over again the past. Difficulty of this. Past, present and future unknown to the seer; all absorbed in the Eternal. Memory may be defined as a getting into the old astral currents. Dangers of this. Day-dreaming and vacancy of mind an effect. To the extent one lives over his past mentally does he tend to act it over again externally: hence, memory the great cause of habits. Memory not only confined to the mind, but also exists in the bodily organs and atoms. Hence great difficulty of purifying the body. Seven years often necessary. Relation of memory to knowledge.

REFERENCES.

Key to Theosophy, section xvi.

MEDIUMSHIP.

Definition of the term. A spiritualistic one, meaning the characteristic of one who gives himself up to psychic influences and becomes the medium for their play. Medium is controlled by astral forces. Many with psychic power

not however mediums. Mediumship more common than suspected. Does not always consist in seeing clairvoyantly or being psychically controlled, but often manifests in other ways. Drunkards, and those unable to control their passions, probably mediumistic. Persons uncontrolled generally, come under the title. Mediumship overcome by creating positivity of character, and particularly by preventing the mind from wandering and from general passivity of disposition. Spiritualistic mediums and those "sitting" for control, become disorganized nervously and physically in a very short time. Astral body is separated from the physical body and given up to the mercy of the shells of the dead. Practice demoralizing in every aspect. External forces rush in and the brain often becomes affected. Hence lying, and falsifying generally, often goes hand in hand with the more complete phases. Part of the work of the Theosophical movement to cure the world of mediumship in all phases. United States a "hot-bed of psychism," and philosophy alone can cure the conditions. Warning against being misled by mediumistic communications instead of by interior intuition.

REFERENCES.

Ocean of Theosophy: pages 150-154. *Key to Theosophy:* section ix. *Astral Intoxication.*

THEOSOPHICAL PROPAGANDA.

How far should branches carry this? Object should be to bring the philosophy to the world. Recognition to be made that the Society has three objects, not merely Universal Brotherhood. Branches should organize the active members into a regular army for work, each member taking that which he is best fitted for. Propaganda then to be carried on in all fields. Propaganda through lecturing; personal visits; writing articles for newspapers; reporting lectures; distributing literature. Propaganda through public discussions and addresses to be carried on without antagonism,—this not meaning, however, that there should be no differences of opinion. Each member in the midst of great possibilities every hour of the day; thousands searching for light. Tact and judgment necessary factors in successful propaganda. Steady work more successful than excitable rush. Theosophical Society formed to awaken the memory of the soul in all men. Many ready to receive wisdom in the present cycle; many unprepared. Whole world cannot be immediately changed, but acquaintances everywhere waiting for aid. Propaganda through home life; by strict attention to duties, serenity of disposition and a desire to help others. Many gradually won over by patience and waiting, and by example.

THEOSOPHICAL NEWS AND WORK.

BEACON T.S. continues successfully its Brotherhood Suppers.

TRIANGLE BRANCH, Alameda, Calif., reports that James Oettl has instituted a series of Sunday lectures in addition to the regular Branch work.

BOSTON gives news that Messrs. Crosbie and Ayers are about to start, in different parts of the city, Sunday morning lectures for the people on Theosophy.

BRISTOL T.S. holds weekly meetings and has taken up the study of the *Ocean of Theosophy*, appointing someone each week to formulate a set of questions thereon.

PACIFIC T.S., of Watsonville, Calif., has disbanded on account of members moving away. This does not mean the interest has abated, and the previous Secretary writes encouragingly of future possibilities.

ROBERT CROSBIE lectured to a large audience on Theosophy in the Oxford Chapel, Lynn, Mass. Several of the papers had column reports. Later Mr. N. A. Bean spoke in the same hall on *Objections to Reïncarnation*. A large audience greeted him and great interest was shown.

AURORA BRANCH, Oakland, Calif., has given the following Sunday lectures during December: 8th, *Karma and Reïncarnation*, by T. H. Slator; 15th, *The Mystery of Sex*, by Dr. Allen Griffiths; 22d, *Life after Death*, by Mercie M. Thirds; 29th, *What Theosophy Is*, by Dr. Frank M. Close.

SAN FRANCISCO BRANCHES have given the following lectures in Red Men's Hall: December 8th, *The Law of Life*, by E. P. Jones; 15th, *Why do We not Remember our past Lives?* by Evan Williams; 22d, *The Mystery of Sex*, by Dr. Allen Griffiths; 29th, *The Devil: his Reformation*, by A. J. Johnson.

BRIDGEPORT, Conn., has recently received visits from members from New York and Boston. Miss Daniell spoke to a large audience in the rooms of the Bridgeport Society and Mr. Claude Falls Wright lectured on the 31st of December in the Hall of Science before the Scientific Society on *Hypnotism* to about 400 people. Every seat in the hall was taken.

CHICKERING HALL (New York) lectures continue successfully. The addresses for the past month have been: *The Devil*, *Mahatmas*, *Yoga Practices* and *Cycles*. Claude Falls Wright organized a class (limited to 200 persons) in the *Secret Doctrine*, at 144 Madison Avenue. The hall was crowded, there being no standing room. The class meets for four Sunday evenings in January.

NEW YEAR'S EVE was the occasion of gatherings in Brooklyn and New York of members of the Society to welcome the incoming of the second last year of the cycle with good wishes and aspirations for the future. At the Headquarters the meeting was conducted by Mr. Joseph H. Fussell, and after shaking hands all round the members signed their name in the Headquarters' roll-book.

MINNEAPOLIS T.S. The rooms of the branch here are crowded and the Society is looking for larger quarters. At President Slafter's address on *Capital Punishment: why not?* on Sunday, December 8th, there was standing room only. This is good news for Minneapolis and shows how the work is being carried on in this quarter. Several applications for membership have been received lately.

NARADA T.S., of Tacoma, Wash., had a Lotus Circle Christmas entertainment on December 22d. It being held on Sunday and on the shortest day in the year it partook of the nature of the "Jule-tide," a custom of the ancient Norseman, and celebrated as of old with the use of decorated trees and lighted candles. A member gave a short explanation of the ancient custom to the children, followed by Lotus Circle exercises, recitations, songs and music by

the children, after which the candies and fruits were distributed to every child present. An interested audience of about seventy were present, of which fully forty were children.

CORRECTION IS NECESSARY of a slight mistake that crept into a late FORUM, regarding Toledo. It was said that there is another T.S. there working under a charter from a so-called American Section. As there is no such section legally, it having been legally merged into the Theosophical Society in America, there can be no legal branch having any competent charter under such a section at Toledo or any where else. Such bodies are simply "bolters."

BROOKLYN T.S. Thursday evening meetings in December were very well attended, the discussions being of unusual interest. The Sunday lectures were as follows: *The Path*, Wm. Main; *Theosophic Theories*, H. T. Patterson; *Riddles of Life*, J. H. Fussell; *Buddhism*, Vespera Freeman; *Masters*, Effie M. Daniell. A class for easy lessons in the *Secret Doctrine* meets every Sunday afternoon. The first volume of the same work is studied on Wednesday evenings.

DETROIT. Application has been received from Detroit for a charter for a Branch at that city to be called the "Deva T.S." The organizing of this Branch is largely the result of continued effort on the part of Mr. R. O. R. Bergath, who has been assisted by the work of members in Toledo, Ohio, and by Mrs. Lillie H. Fisk and Miss Lizzie Chapin. Interest has been aroused throughout the community and there are indications that Detroit is to become a strong theosophical centre. Burcham Harding is to go there shortly.

MANASA BRANCH (Toledo) has just issued a new syllabus for three months, beginning January 7th, 1896. Good press reports of meetings are given every week, and now one of the Sunday papers has commenced publishing a series of Theosophical articles. A member of the branch has been preparing the way for Mr. Harding by giving parlor lectures in some of the towns in this vicinity. Large and attentive audiences, as well as the urgent requests received for more lectures, testify to the interest that has been awakened in Theosophy.

CLINTON (Iowa) Branch has a membership of seven, and with one exception is composed of the former members of Indra T.S. It has a library of forty books and a goodly quantity of unbound periodicals. Meets Sunday evenings with an average attendance of five members and occasionally some visitors. The order of exercise is: first, reading of minutes. etc.; second, a short devetional reading from *Bhagavad Gita;* third, a reading or paper on some theosophical subject by a member (the branch is at present reading *Reïncarnation*, by Anderson); fourth, a "Quiz," from *Theosophical Glossary*. The secretary is Chas. E. Freeman, and the president Henry Edmunds.

LOS ANGELES BRANCH of the T.S.A. has been the centre of a great deal of healthy activity this fall and winter. The headquarters at 431½ South Spring street are kept open every afternoon, and many books loaned and questions answered. On Tuesday evening a beginners' class, averaging about sixteen or eighteen enquirers, is held. On Wednesday the regular branch meeting is held. Its attendance varies from twenty-five to fifty. The Friday evening H.P.B. training-class has an average of eighteen to twenty members. All meetings are always open to the public. On Sunday there are two regular lectures in Odd Fellows Hall. At 11 a.m. Mr. H. A. Gibson is the regular speaker.

At 7:45 p.m. some members of the branch or visiting speaker gives an address, when the hall, which has a seating capacity of 200, is always full and frequently crowded.

LOTUS CIRCLES in New York held their annual festival in the Aryan Hall on December 29th. Very many children were present. The hall was crowded. The program, which was full of interest, consisted in three charming songs from Miss Katherine Kimball, violin solos by W. A. Raboch, an exhibition of ventriloquism by Prof. Verne, and some Irish fairy tales by C. F. Wright. The entertainment was opened by an address from Dr. E. B. Guild. The entire proceedings were organized by Mrs. E. C. Mayer, who is certainly to be congratulated upon their entire success.

UPASIKA T.S., South Brooklyn, held its first meeting in its room, 225 Lincoln Place, Wednesday evening, November 27th. The subject under discussion until January 1st was, *Of what use to Christians is a Knowledge of Theosophy as Presented to the World of to-day?* The one paper each evening is limited to fifteen minutes. The meetings adjourn at 9:15. The officers of the branch are: Col. H. N. Hooper, president; Dr. H. A. Bunker, vice-president; Miss Hooper, secretary; Dr. T. P. Hyatt, treasurer; Mr. V. Carroll, librarian; Mrs. L. T. V. Carroll, assistant librarian.

PROMETHEUS T.S.A., being now six months old, I send a review of its progress to date. We started with a membership of thirty, and have since demitted four and gained one new member. We have rented a building two blocks from the business centre and refitted it as an audience room with a seating capacity of one hundred and thirty. This was dedicated to Theosophy on June 4th last by a lecture by Brother Copeland, of Salem. We immediately began a series of Sunday evening lectures, which have since been maintained uninterruptedly. We also organized a class for the study of the *Secret Doctrine*. Our branch meetings on Tuesday evenings are also well attended, the audience averaging about twenty-two persons, and about the same number attend our training class. We are doing better and more effective work than we have done for the last two years or more, and the outlook is bright.—*(Communicated.)*

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN. The class which was formed during the visit here of Claude Falls Wright, one year ago, still holds weekly meetings, which are attended by about twenty members. Regular study by the members not being practicable owing to the peculiar conditions of a university town, a plan which differs somewhat from those ordinarily in use has been adopted. The F.T.S. at whose house the meetings are held sends out cards, with a syllabus covering three months written on the back. The syllabus is headed, "Conversations on Theosophy." After a talk of half an hour or more, given by the hostess, lively discussions, in which all take part, follow. On December 4th Mrs. Mary F. Lang, of the Manasa Branch, Toledo, addressed the class upon *The Practical Mission of the T.S.* The members hope to have a visit from Mr. Burcham Harding very soon.

"H.P.B." BRANCH. The plan of which we spoke in our last notice of the first Sunday night in each month being devoted to "Questions on Theosophy Answered" we are glad to say proves successful. Good audiences attend and we find it an opportunity for members to keep themselves in readiness to reply to questions given them. We find "What is Theosophy?" is often asked, and

in fact the larger part of the questions deal with the fundamental teachings of Theosophy and how they can be applied to daily life, thus showing the desire of the public to gain knowledge of Theosophy as it *is*. An entertainment was given by the children of the Lotus Circle, representing the pictures from Mother Goose, and it proved a success. Tickets were liberally distributed, especially among the public school children. Music was provided by several friends of the Lotus Circle, and when the children left the hall they were presented with little favors as mementoes, to which a card was attached bearing the address and hour of meeting of the Circle, with an invitation to attend. The Sunday evening lectures for December were: 1st, "Questions on Theosophy Answered;" 8th, Mr. Joseph H. Fussell on *The Riddles of Life;* 15th, Mr. H. T. Patterson on *Theosophical Theories;* 22d, Miss E. M. Daniell on *Masters;* 29th, Mr. Percy Woodcock on *Esoteric Astrology.—(Communicated.)*

BLAVATSKY T.S. (Washington, D.C.) On the first day of October last new quarters were secured in in the Metzerott Building, on F street, between 11th and 12th streets. A large hall on the third floor (to which access was had by elevator) was rented, and the Sunday lectures, which were omitted during the hot weather, were resumed, the officers of the branch and in two instances members taking their turns in presenting to the Washington public the old-new truths of Theosophy, the regular branch meetings being held on Thursday nights. Recently the branch had the pleasure of entertaining Mr. E. T. Hargrove, who arrived on Tuesday, January 7th, 1896. He lectured that night in the Hall of the Legion of Loyal Women to an audience which filled the hall, and on Thursday, January 9th, he lectured in the branch hall to a much larger audience, with such good effect that a large number of strangers attended the following Sunday night lecture given by Mr. Robt. L. Lerch, the vice-president of the branch, who lectured on *The Basic Truths of Theosophy*, and afterwards answered questions asked by those present. The branch, though not large numerically, is fully alive to the necessity of keeping Theosophical ideas before the public, and by liberal advertising and other ways strives to do so. The library consists of about two hundred volumes, which are lent to the public as well as to members who by the diligent use of the books seem to appreciate the privilege.

NOTICES.

BRANCHES are requested to send short reports from month to month of their doing and activities for the FORUM. Each Branch should do this, as the other Societies like to hear of the work done.

BRANCHES and members having good papers or copies of addresses read, at their disposal, are invited to send them to the President's office at the Headquarters. Latterly a great many requests have come for good unpublished papers on Theosophy, and if sent in they could be advantageously used.